



The Idaho Falls Rocketry Club recently held its second annual Rocket Camp, sponsored by Idaho National Laboratory's Center for Space Nuclear Research.

Idaho Falls students watch rockets blast off

by Megan Crepeau, *Nuclear Science & Technology Communications*

It was a clear July morning, bright and hot, when the 40 people standing on the Bonneville High School baseball diamond turned their faces upward, shielded their eyes and squinted to witness Porter Nelson's success: a small rocket shaped like an SR-71 Blackbird, blasted high in the sky.

Nelson, a fourth-grader whose favorite subjects are reading and math, couldn't have been happier about it. "It felt great, like a lot of success," he said. "It was worth building."

Nelson was one of 31 local children to attend the Idaho Falls Rocketry Club's second annual Rocket Camp. Sponsored by Idaho National Laboratory's Center for Space Nuclear Research, the camp gives participants hands-on experience in an important and challenging field — it really is rocket science. The Rocketry Club's directors spent three days helping camp members build rockets and the last two days helping to shoot them off.

CSNR Director Steve Howe, Ph.D., said there are two main reasons that INL chose to sponsor the camp

"We want to do something for the community, and promoting math and science is a good idea ... one of our goals is to beef up the flowstream of engineers, even starting at this age," he said, noting that the nuclear field faces a shortage of engineers.

Howe said the camp is attractive to children, though, for a simpler reason: "It's an exciting thing to do for kids this age," he said.

Twelve-year-old Patrick McIlwain agreed, and confirmed Howe's belief that kids can get hooked on science at a young age.

"It's pretty fun," he said. "I might come back a second time."

Love of rocketry isn't confined to the elementary school set, though. The parents, INL representatives and Rocketry Club members in attendance all helped count down every launch, and grown-ups were on hand to help pack rockets with crepe paper, incendiaries and plastic parachutes.

The products ranged from tiny tubes built by first-time rocketeers to the largest rocket, a 6'7" behemoth sent into the blue by 14-year-old twins Kevin and Nathan Marshall.

Young or old, newbies or veterans, all the participants seemed to share McIlwain's sentiments: "I just like to see rockets fly. They're cool," he said.

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Brothers Kevin and Nathan Marshall pose with their rocket, which, at 6' 7", was the tallest rocket at the camp.